

Topic Summaries and Background



Care for Creation

Summary of Issue

The climate is changing, and humans are responsible for the increased carbon in our atmosphere, which has made this change as extreme as it is. Due to climate change:

- Water levels are rising, displacing people, sinking islands and low-lying nations, increasing the salinization of the soil on coastal countries, making growing crops near impossible.
- Extreme climate events (typhoons, fires, hurricanes, flooding, drought, etc) are happening more frequently and more intensely, displacing people, destroying homes, livelihoods, and a personal sense of security.
- Water shortages in some parts of the world are becoming more extreme, leading to drought, famine, and increased situations of conflict.
- Disease and crop disease are becoming more prevalent, as mosquitoes and bugs which infest plants are able to survive the winters due to warmer temperatures.

The impact of climate change upon our sisters and brothers around the world will only become harsher and stronger, and it will eventually affect us increasingly as well.

Catholic Social Teaching Theme(s): Care for God's Creation; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Solidarity

Deeper Justice Issues:

- The people who are suffering most from climate change are often those who did the least to cause it.
- Our lifestyles of high consumerism have lead to the crisis being as extreme as it is for those who have the least already.
- The people living in countries affected most by climate change often have the least amount of infrastructure to mitigate its effects (poor road system, weaker building structures, little electricity, etc).
- In the United States, communities in poverty and communities of color are at greater risk for exposure to air pollution and dangerous toxic waste sites.

Response(s) by People Affected:

- [Fish Youth Group in Kenya responds to Flooding of Lake Victoria](#)
- [REAAP—Resilience through Enhanced Adaptation, Action-learning and Partnership](#): A CRS project is helping their village of Meiso cope with climate change

- [Catholic Relief Services' Kom-Yilma project](#) invests in critical water infrastructure so that schools in Burkina Faso have safe and reliable water. A critical part of the project is ensuring that community members can operate and maintain the water systems.
- [Illinois People's Action](#): Illinois People's Action organizes to promote a frack-free and clean energy run Illinois.
- [Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice \(CCEJ\)](#): Educates communities most at risk in Connecticut on the connection between poor air quality and poor health.
- [Urban Tree Connection's Neighborhood Foods](#): Urban Tree Connection's Neighborhood Foods was formed to address a low-income community's demand to re-purpose abandoned lots as food gardens. See also

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Immigration and the Movement of Peoples

Summary of Issue

People have to move from their homes for many different reasons: war, famine, drought, lack of employment, discrimination, violence, gangs, and many others. Many of these push factors result in families wandering, homeless, vulnerable to criminals—including human traffickers—and the environment. Children often miss long periods of school. Families often end up in refugee camps, where resources are few and disease spreads easily.

- [Displaced Peoples](#): There are an estimated 59.5 million forcibly displaced people around the world today - 19.5 million refugees and 38.2 million internally displaced peoples

When they move, it can be very difficult to find a new home, as everything is new. Most countries receiving immigrants are hostile towards people who have immigrated, against everything from their color of skin or language to their culture.

- Forced displacement is a growing problem: the highest number of asylum claims ever reported was in 2014: 1.66 million.
 - Syria is the top source of refugees in 2014: 1 out of every 4 refugees is Syrian

[Catholic Social Teaching Theme\(s\)](#): Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Care for God's Creation; Solidarity

Deeper Justice Issues:

- People who are forcibly displaced often do not have a place to go: countries have limits on the numbers of immigrants or refugees they can accept.
- Upon arrival in a new country, immigrants often face racism, prejudice, misunderstanding, fear, and systems working against them (ie: "Irish need not apply").
- In the USA, the process for becoming a citizen is outdated and long, and there are many people living in the shadows of being undocumented. Further issues include feeling unwanted and always having to hide who you are.
- People who are forcibly displaced are often already the poorest and most vulnerable.
- The root causes of the conflict, climate change event, discrimination which forces people to move often lack justice, affect the people most vulnerable (and usually least at fault) first, and they do not have adequate healing opportunities.

Response(s) by People Affected:

- [67 Sueños](#): Undocumented youth providing a place for other undocumented youth to tell their stories

- [Refugees Helping Refugees](#): Refugees in NY provide services and assistance for other refugees coming to the US

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Education

Summary of Issue

Education is essential to human development and to ensuring that individuals in every country are able to contribute their potential fully. Even when children complete school, they often do so without acquiring basic skills necessary for work and life. Educating children—particularly girls—has a huge impact on eliminating poverty. Studies show that an extra year of secondary schooling for girls can increase their future wages by 10 to 20%. Education is a powerful driver of development and one of the strongest instruments for improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability.

- There are 124 million school-aged children worldwide out-of-school. Of these, 34 million live in conflict-affected areas. 63 million are girls.

Catholic Social Teaching Theme(s): Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Solidarity

Deeper Justice Issues:

- Women and girls are more likely to be excluded from basic educational opportunities than men and boys.
- Lack of education limits prospects, decreases family income, reduces health, puts women and girls at risk of trafficking and exploitation, and limits the economic advancement of entire countries.
- Violence and other conflict disrupts the lives of families and children, preventing regular school attendance.
- The education system in the U.S. could do more to accommodate those living in poverty, and those for whom English is not their first language.
- Lack of education is often generational: lack of opportunity for education leads to more lack.

Response(s) by People Affected:

- ADSN: [Child Friendly Space Starting Education for Children Who Would Not Have Access](#)
- [Catholic Relief Services' THRIVE](#): This early childhood development project builds on CRS' work with orphans and vulnerable children includes key support to health, education and child protection programs. See also <http://www.crs.org/stories/new-toy-story-how-cans-buttons-boxes-build-brains>.

- [Catholic Relief Services' Valuing Girls' Formal Education](#) project works in the Democratic Republic of Congo to respond to economic, social and educational barriers that have led to low educational outcomes for girls.

Topic Summaries and Background



Global Women's Justice

Summary of Issue

In many areas of the world, women disproportionately suffer. Patriarchal cultures abound, some cultures dissuade girls from attending school since they will be less “desirable” for a future husband, bride-price still exists in some cultures, some cultures only want sons. Two-thirds of illiterate adults are women, yet studies also find that on average, women spend 90% of their earned income on their family, while men only spend 30-40%. In many, many places around the world, being born as a female instantly means that life will be more difficult, but investing in women and girls yields incredible returns.

- According to the World Health Organization, at least 35% of the world's women have experienced some form of gender-based violence, and many men have been victims as well.

Catholic Social Teaching Theme(s): Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity

Deeper Justice Issues:

- Many low-income countries continue to be burdened by high rates of maternal mortality and high fertility, which are closely linked to high infant mortality and gender inequality.
- Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is the most prevalent form of gender inequality. More than one third of the women in the world have experienced some form of gender based violence.
- Globally, women do not have equal access to opportunities and resources—a good job with equal pay, or access to land—nor to social protection.
- Women's life choices are constrained by gender stereotypes, stigma and violence.
- The paid and unpaid work that women do is not universally respected and valued.
- Women's lives are limited without an equal say in economic decision-making: from having a voice in how time and money are spent in their households; to the ways in which resources are raised and allocated in their national economies; to the broader economic policies set by global institutions.

Response(s) by People Affected:

- CRS: [Local Women Grow Cactus with SILC](#)
- Because I Am A Girl: [Girls Helping Other Girls](#)
- CRS: [Involving men to improve maternal and child health](#)

Topic Summaries and Background



Economic Justice and Poverty

Summary of Issue

Millions of Americans live in poverty. Some are thrown into poverty by illness or unemployment; others live in a seemingly endless cycle of poverty that spans lifetimes and generations. A disproportionate number of children—many of them our students—live in poverty. The causes of poverty—and the factors that make it so difficult to eradicate—are embedded in economics, politics and discrimination.

In the U.S. and globally, spikes in food prices, an increasingly unstable global climate and the prolonged economic slowdown have hurt poor people the most. As developing countries grow their economies and lift millions out of poverty, they may also experience growing inequality. We now know that nations with a widening gap between those who can and cannot access opportunities in life have difficulty sustaining economic growth and social stability over time.

Catholic Social Teaching Theme(s): Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Solidarity

Deeper Justice Issues:

- Rates of food insecurity are substantially higher for households with incomes near or below the poverty line, both domestically and internationally.
- Poor and low-wage earners are excluded in large part from economic opportunities, leading to joblessness and homelessness.
- In the U.S., the Black, urban Native American, Latino/Chicano, and other non-white racial communities have suffered greatly from years of marginalization and being excluded in large part from the economic opportunities of this nation. Other countries also often have communities which suffer continual and historical marginalizations (e.g. indigenous communities, religious communities, etc).
- Poverty disproportionately impacts those most vulnerable in society, including those with different physical and mental abilities, as well as senior citizens, women and children.

Response(s) by People Affected:

- CRS [Strengthening Community Opportunities for Peace and Equality \(SCOPE\)](#): SCOPE organizes workshops that introduce technical training in beekeeping, while teaching good governance, leadership, how to integrate young people and women into the economy equitably, and how to resolve conflict peacefully.

- [CRS Savings and Internal Lending Communities \(SILC\)](#): This approach has created economic opportunities for more than 1.3 million people who live in the world's most impoverished areas.
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development: CCHD embodies the Church's belief that those who are experiencing poverty know best how change unjust systems and structures that keep them in poverty.
 - [What is CCHD?](#)
 - [What organizations in Seattle are funded by CCHD to do anti-poverty organizing?](#)
 - What is community organizing, and why does the Church support it?
<http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/Who-We-Are/upload/Community-Organizing.pdf>
 - Stories of Hope: [Encounter those of Poverty USA](#)